

5 August 1953

BRIEFING NOTES FOR
THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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THE SITUATION IN IRAN

Prime Minister Mossadeq has won an overwhelming 161,062 to 105 vote victory in Tehran and suburbs for dissolving the present Majlis. He will probably have little trouble in securing similar support in the balloting scheduled for 10 August in the rest of Iran.

Full Tudeh support appears to have been the major source of his strength. The party turned out in force and dominated the scene by assisting in and actually controlling the voting. A Tehran report states that 50,000 ballots were delivered to the Tudeh in advance. Presumably all of these, and even more, were cast by the party.

The lack of an opposition vote was due in part to its boycott of the polls, an action which had been urged by Mullah Kashani. The opposition also feared reprisal by government and Tudeh forces if it opposed Mossadeq. Finally, an attitude of hopelessness favored apathy.

The prime minister has promised elections for a new Majlis after the referendum, but is now faced with a situation in which the Tudeh party has become his main source of popular strength. If he disavows the party, he can hardly survive a test of strength at the polls; however, if he collaborates

with it in a Majlis election, the Tudeh will be in a position to demand representation in the next cabinet. Under power granted him by the Majlis, Mossadeq can rule by decree until next January and can thus delay elections while he maneuvers for position.

Meanwhile, there are indications that Mossadeq may already be reassessing his policy toward the United States. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] In contrast, the American embassy reported the figure at 40,000 to 50,000 and New York Times correspondent Love in Tehran calculated it at 100,000. In trying to minimize Tudeh strength, Mossadeq is departing from his usual line of playing up the Communist menace in order to get more American aid.

Also indicative of possible changes in policy is the vitriolic attack on the United States that Mossadeq's son made to American embassy officials on 1 August. Obviously talking for his father, Gholam Mossadeq insisted that American "stupid diplomacy" and "brazen" support of Britain was alienating the middle class led by his father, heretofore the only pro-American group in Iran. This diatribe suggests that Mossadeq may be getting ready to open an anti-American campaign if aid is not forthcoming soon.

While Mossadeq is using such tactics against the United States, he is opening formal talks with the Soviet ambassador in Tehran aimed at settling frontier disputes and Iran's claims for approximately \$21,000,000. The Soviet Union has announced that it in turn has counterclaims whose size is not defined. Arrangements for these discussions are to be made by the new Soviet ambassador Lavrentiev, who presented his credentials to Mossadeq on 4 August.

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 the Kremlin has made some friendly gestures and that it is promoting formal discussions which may already have begun. Mossadeq has long maintained that he knows how to handle the domestic Communists; he may now be trying to do business with Moscow.

Barring violent and concerted action by Mossadeq's opposition, the next few months will probably show the prime minister in full control of the government apparatus. He may be expected to continue his efforts to eliminate or neutralize his opponents.

Progressive deterioration in Iranian-American relations and a corresponding improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations may develop. With the Tudeh controlling the only well-organized political group in Iran, the party stands to benefit considerably from a situation which will advance it toward its major objective, control of the Iranian government and orientation of that government toward Moscow.

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